

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **BIRDATTHEWIRE BIDS TO SNAP SKID IN GRADE II CHILUKKI AT CHURCHILL DOWNS**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, Nov. 2, 2016)** – Although trainer **Dale Romans** is in Southern California this week for competition in the Breeders' Cup Championships, the Louisville native will keep a close watch on his home track at Churchill Downs Racetrack where **Forum Racing IV's** veteran **Birdatthewire** will bid to make her first visit to the winner's circle in 2016 as she takes on eight rivals in Saturday's 31<sup>st</sup> running of the \$200,000 Chilukki (Grade II).

The 4-year-old daughter of 2009 Belmont Stakes (GI) winner Summer Bird will attempt to snap a string of eight consecutive losses when she breaks from post two in the one-mile race for fillies and mares ages three and up. The Chilukki is the featured ninth race on Saturday's program of 10 live races at Churchill Downs, which will also offer simulcast wagering on the Breeders' Cup races from Santa Anita. Post times for Saturday's racing at Churchill Downs have been adjusted to accommodate the Pacific Time Zone schedule for the Breeders' Cup and the first live race at the Louisville track is scheduled for 2:15 p.m. (EDT).

Birdatthewire, the only Grade I stakes winner in the Chilukki field, is part of a 1-2 punch for Romans, who will also send **Paul Lichtefeld** and **Jack Stewart's Engaginglee** into the race. The daughter of 2000 Kentucky Derby winner Fusaichi Pegasus has enjoyed success at Churchill Downs in 2016 with a victory in the Locust Grove (GIII) in September and an earlier runner-up finish to Breeders' Cup Distaff (GI) contender **Curalina** in the La Troienne (GI).

While Birdatthewire has yet to win a race in 2016, she has run well against some of the nation's most talented older fillies and mares. Following an upset victory in Santa Anita's La Brea (GI) that concluded her 3-year-old season, Birdatthewire's 2016 campaign got off to a promising start with a runner-up finish over that course to multiple stakes winner **Taris** in the La Canada (GII). Other solid 2016 performances include a fourth-place run in Keeneland's Madison (GI), where she finished behind multiple Grade I winner **Sheer Drama** and 2015 Breeders' Cup winners **Stopchargingmaria** (GI Distaff) and **Wavell Avenue** (GI Filly & Mare Sprint); a third-place finish to **Spelling Again** in the Princess Rooney (GII) at Gulfstream Park; a third to **Genre** over a sloppy track in the Molly Pitcher (GIII) at Monmouth Park; and a fourth-place finish behind **Haveyougoneaway** in Saratoga's Ballerina (GI).

Birdatthewire will attempt to make amends for a disappointing run in her most recent start in the \$400,000 Presque Isle Masters (GII) at Presque Isle Downs, where she finished eighth as the favorite behind the victorious **Sarah Sis** over the Pennsylvania track's synthetic Tapeta racing surface. Romans' filly loomed as a serious contender for the 2015 **Longines Kentucky Oaks** (GI) at Churchill Downs following wins early in her 3-year-old season in Gulfstream Park's Forward Gal (GII) and Gulfstream Park Oaks (GII), but finished fifth to **Lovely Maria** on the first Friday in May at Churchill Downs.

**Drayden Van Dyke**, who will seek his first stakes victory at Churchill Downs, will ride Birdatthewire, who will carry co-high weight of 121 pounds in her second bid to win the Chilukki. Romans' filly finished fifth to Spelling Again in its 2015 running and brings a career record of 4-3-3 in 19 races and career earnings of \$702,980 into the Chilukki.

Engaginglee finished a distant fourth of five starters behind Breeders' Cup Distaff contender **I'm a Chatterbox** in her most recent start for Romans in Keeneland's Juddmonte Spinster (GI). **Jose Valdivia Jr.** will be in the saddle aboard Engaginglee, who breaks from post five and will carry 121 pounds.

Another accomplished contender in the Chilukki is **Mary K. Grum's Athena**, a 4-year-old daughter of 2007 Kentucky Derby winner Street Sense who won the Roxelana Overnight Stakes at Churchill Downs in late June. **Helen Pitts-Blasi** trains Athena, who has won four of seven races at Churchill Downs and will break from post six under jockey **Calvin Borel**.

**Five D Thoroughbreds' Kathballu** enters the Chilukki off a comfortable seven-furlong allowance victory at Keeneland on Oct. 9. Prior to that outing the best effort on the year by the **Kenny McPeck**-trained daughter of Bluegrass Cat was a runner-up finish to Sarah Sis in the Chicago Handicap (GIII) over the synthetic Polytrack surface at Arlington Park. **Shaun Bridgmohan** will ride the 4-year-old Kathballu, who will break from post three.

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The Chilukki field also includes a pair of starters trained by **Ian Wilkes** in **Unbridledexplosion LLC's Unbridledexplosion** and **Six Column Stables LLC, Randall Bloch, John Seiler III** and **Fred Merritt's Sweetgrass**. The former makes her third start of the year following an 11-month break and comes into the Chilukki off a runner-up finish in a Keeneland allowance race. The latter won an allowance race at Saratoga and finished fourth behind Engaginglee in the Locust Grove in her most recent outing.

The field for the Chilukki from the rail out (with jockey and weight): **Mayla (Miguel Mena, 121)**, Birdatthewire (Van Dyke, 121), Kathballu (Bridgmohan, 121), Unbridledexplosion (**Brian Hernandez Jr., 121**), Engaginglee (Valdivia Jr., 121), Athena (Borel, 121), **Kiss to Remember (Joe Rocco Jr., 121)**, **She's a Bootsy Too (Channing Hill, 118)** and Sweetgrass (**Chris Landeros, 121**).

The Chilukki is named in honor of **Stonerside Stable's** champion 2-year-old filly of 1999. The **Bob Baffert**-trained daughter of Cherokee Run set a pair of track records at Churchill Downs during her career. She lowered the standard for 4 ½ furlongs in her racing debut over the track at two and returned at three to set a stakes record in the race that now bears her name, but was then known as the Churchill Downs Distaff. Chilukki completed her racing career with a record of 11-3-0 in 17 races with career earnings of \$1,201,828.

Churchill Downs, the world's most legendary racetrack, has conducted Thoroughbred racing and presented America's greatest race, the Kentucky Derby, continuously since 1875. Located in Louisville, the flagship racetrack of Churchill Downs Incorporated (NASDAQ: CHDN) offers year-round simulcast wagering at the historic track. Churchill Downs will conduct the 143<sup>rd</sup> running of the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands on May 6, 2017. The track's Fall Meet is scheduled for Oct. 30-Nov. 27. Churchill Downs has hosted the Breeders' Cup World Championships eight times and the event will return to the track in 2018. Information is available at [www.ChurchillDowns.com](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com).

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